

THE THREE C'S CONCEPT  
of special education for  
mentally retarded persons

Approaches, Aspects & Applications

Rev. Fr. THOMAS FELIX, CMI

CENTRAL INSTITUTE ON MENTAL RETARDATION  
TRIVANDRUM; KERALA, INDIA.

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# **THE THREE C's CONCEPT**

## **OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR MENTALLY RETARDED PERSONS**

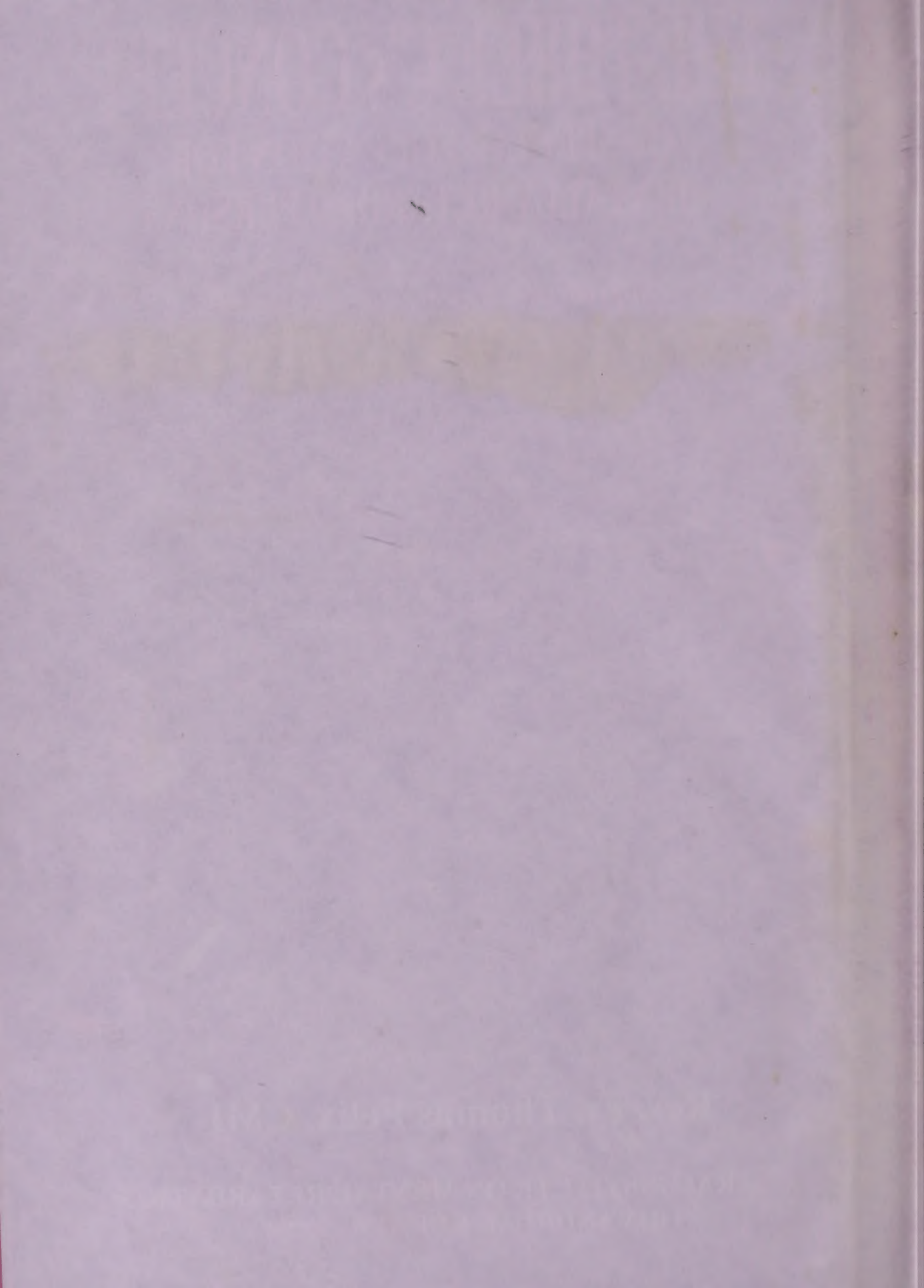
**Approaches, Aspects and Applications**



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*By the same author*

Total Development  
Hope for the Mentally Retarded

*Cover Photograph:*  
Udayasankar

*Sketches:*  
Jayachandran

First published 1989

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Published by  
Central Institute on Mental Retardation  
Jagathy, Trivandrum-695014, Kerala, India  
in collaboration with Oklahoma Benedictine Institute  
on Mental Retardation, Shawnee, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

Printed by Artech Printing, Shawnee, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

D210

01975

**COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL**  
**326, V Main, I Block**  
**Koramangala**  
**Bangalore-560034**  
**India**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Fr. Thomas Pella, C.M.I., was born as the fourth son of Mr. P. V. Kuriyil and Mrs. Mariam Kuriyil on August 31, 1936 at Kalamassery, a village near Kottayam in the former State of Travancore in Kerala, the southernmost State of India.

After successfully completing high school education, Thomas Pella, as he was known then, joined the C.M.I. congregation in Kerala and entered the novitiate. Two years later, he came to the United States and spent two years in Philosophy and Educational Psychology at St. Thomas College in Bangor, Maine. He received a B.S. in Philosophy from St. Thomas College.

He was ordained a priest by Bishop Pella Karickhapparam in 1964. In the early stages of his ministry, he was assigned to Changanacherry, Kottayam district. During his time there, with generous help from various sources, he was able to

## DEDICATION

In all humility and bowing before our Lord with a heart full of prayer, I dedicate this book to my religious community, Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (C.M.I.), India, which always illumined my path of service to the weaker sections of humanity including the mentally retarded and guided and blessed me.

After coming to India, he joined the Holy Family, the school for the mentally retarded, at Changanacherry and the Central Institute for Mental Rehabilitation in Thiruvananthapuram in 1980 for the special education of teachers leading to the Diploma in Mental Rehabilitation. Then in 1983 he established the Developmental Centre for the Mentally Retarded (D.C.M.R.), another school, at Thiruvananthapuram. It is a place where he evolved and developed the Therapeutic Community and has successfully applied it in the education of the mentally retarded in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The D.C.M.R. started by a few members of the Carmelite Order, a group of mentally retarded people trained by D.C.M.R., and now through an Independent Living Group House at Kalamassery set up in 1984 and later transferred to Kalamassery by M.I.M.A. in Thiruvananthapuram since the D.C.M.R. moved to 1985, and an effort by them.

In the Central Institute at Thiruvananthapuram he has built up a library of books and a very large collection of audio visual material including video and audio tapes. He has also started a journal called *Alpha* at Bangalore and *Alphavision* dealing with mental retardation.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Father Thomas Felix, C.M.I., was born as the fourth son of Mr. K.V. Kurien and Mrs. Mariam Kurien on August 31, 1936 at Kaduthuruthy, a village near Kottayam in the former State of Travancore in Kerala, the southernmost State of India.

After successfully completing high school education, Thomas Kurien, as he was known then, joined the C.M.I. congregation in Kerala and studied for priesthood, first learning Syriac and Latin for four years and then specializing in Philosophy and Educational Psychology at Dharmaram College at Bangalore. There he prepared a thesis on 'Personality in Marxist Philosophy'.

He was ordained as Father Thomas Felix Kurichiaparampil in 1964. In the early stages he devoted himself to social work in Changanacherry, Kottayam district. During that time he, with generous help from various sources, built many houses for the poor. But within a few years, deriving inspiration from his mother, he was convinced that all his energies and care should go to the service of the more disadvantaged sections of the people, namely the mentally retarded persons.

Thus began for him a life of unremitting work, study, travel, and teaching including the development of new ideas in special education solely dedicated to the cause of the mentally retarded.

He started the first institution for the mentally retarded at Changanacherry in south Kerala in 1971 with five children and named it Asha Bhavan (the Home of Hope). After building it up for five years, he left to attend the World Congress on Mental Retardation at Dublin in 1975. During the next one year he visited eleven countries in Europe and studied the work of various institutions on mental retardation.

After coming back to India, he started the Asha Kendram, the school for the mentally retarded, in Cochin and the Central Institute on Mental Retardation in Trivandrum in 1980 for the special education of teachers leading to the Diploma on Mental Retardation. Then in 1983 he established the Developmental Centre for the Mentally Retarded (D.C.M.R.), another school, in Trivandrum. It is in these institutions that he evolved and developed the Three C's Concept and has intensively and successfully applied it to the education of the mentally retarded in Cochin and Trivandrum and in about 40 schools started by teachers trained by the Central Institute. A large number of mentally retarded youths trained by D.C.M.R. are now managing an Independent Living Group Home at Kovalam set up in 1984 and their first milk booth in India (sanctioned by MILMA in Trivandrum near the D.C.M.R.) started in 1989 and run solely by them.

At the Central Institute at Trivandrum he has built up a library of books and a very large collection of audio-visual material including video and audio tapes, films and 70,000 slides. He has also started a journal called Asha in English and Malayalam dealing with mental retardation.





To gain a global understanding of the problems of the mentally retarded and make a direct personal appraisal of the methods and techniques of their training and special education, he visited not only almost all such institutions for the purpose in India and did a special course at the B.M. Institute at Ahmedabad but also undertook several tours to similar institutions and study centres in Europe, the U.K., Ireland, the U.S.A., Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Japan, Australia and New Zealand and made comparative studies. During that period he also completed a course of special education for the mentally retarded in St. Vincenzstift in Rudesheim in West Germany.

From 1976 to 1980 he did graduate and post-graduate studies in special education in Duquesne University in Pittsburg, U.S.A. It was then that he felt that the traditional method of special education for the mentally retarded based on the three R's was not entirely suitable for them and began to develop the original Three C's Concept based on basic shapes and colours.

In the course of his studies, he underwent training in management in the Centre for Developmental Learning Disorders at the Birmingham Alabama University, U.S.A., and ever since has been building up closer communication and freely exchanging ideas on special education with experts in the field all over the world.

Fr. Felix has attended the World Congress on Mental Retardation held in Dublin (1975), Washington D.C. (1976), Toronto (1982), New Delhi (1985) and Dublin (1988) and several international seminars and symposia on topics connected with mental retardation in Barcelona (1975), Montreal (1977), Marburg in West Germany (1981), Hamburg (1985), Rio de Janeiro (1986), Buenos Aires (1986), Stockholm (1988) and Bangkok (1989) and presented papers. He was a delegate to the International Seminar on the future U.N. Convention on Rights of the Child held in Chantilly near Paris in September 1989.

In collaboration with Fr. Paul Zahler, Director of the Oklahoma Benedictine Institute on Mental Retardation, he has set up the International Institute on Mental Retardation in U.S.A. whose curriculum includes the Three C's Concept. Regular workshops and teaching programs for the teachers, the families of mentally retarded persons, social workers and students have been held by him jointly with Fr. Paul Zahler almost every year since 1981 at Oklahoma and Minnesota, U.S.A.

Fr. Felix is a member of the Special Committee set up by the Government of Kerala State of India for drawing up a curriculum and syllabus for the education of the mentally retarded.





## PREFACE

It was my mother, with eleven children among whom I am the fourth, who first made me open my eyes towards the mentally retarded. She used to tell us that God had been very kind to her in that all her children were normal and growing up well. She has very often been found to be bestowing a lot of care and attention on our neighbour's mentally retarded child, who frequented our house. Later when I had to choose my field of activity as a priest, I did not have to think twice before making a choice. The cause of the mentally retarded was dear to my heart and I chose that for my pursuit with alacrity.

When I started the first school at Changanacherry, it was like any other school for the mentally retarded with boarding facilities, using teaching methods and techniques based on the alphabet and numbers in the system of 3 R's. It took me only a few years to find out that this system of education was not at all suitable for the MR. Instead of mental development, they suffered further retardation. Stowing away the mentally retarded person in a boarding was for the parents perhaps an easier solution. I was, however, convinced that normalisation of a mentally retarded person, which should be the primary goal of any special education program for such persons, could be achieved only if he lived with his family and in the midst of his community and came to school daily, thereby involving himself in interpersonal communication and socialization. It was thus that the Asha Kendram in Ernakulam and D.C.M.R. in Trivandrum were started, taking MR persons as day students.

In the course of a few years that I have been working in this field emerged before my mind's eye the Three C's Concept and based on the basic shapes and colours. We have now worked out the seven-step teaching technique of the Three C's Concept using shapes as medium. We have also evolved the system of training teachers for the Diploma in Special Education and for giving refresher courses to families for handling their mentally retarded wards most efficaciously and taking them towards normalization.

We have also identified a number of teaching and learning materials for use in educating the mentally retarded. We have convincingly found that the special education given to the mentally retarded under the Three C's Concept has been most effective in bettering their quality of life and helping them to stand on their own and acquire independent means of livelihood.

I have put forward these ideas on different occasions at various national or international seminars or at the World Congress on Mental Retardation. These have now been edited and brought together in this book.





I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to Shri Rosscode Krishna Pillai, mediaperson and author, in rendering his invaluable guidance and help in writing and producing this book.

Shri P. Achuthan Nair, with long professional experience in stenography and reporting, has been of great help in typing out the manuscript and doing all the laborious tasks connected with it.

I have to make a special mention here that the dedicated involvement and practical association of Sr. Elise, Sr. Lucy and Mrs. Susila Kuriachan have been of immense support in developing the Three C's Concept successfully.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Shri P. J. Jacob who had been an elder brother, friend and philosopher for more than two decades and has been a motivating force behind the success in evolving the Concept at all stages. I also place on record, with a grateful heart, the services rendered by Prof. M.K. Sanoo and Mr. Frank Mathew.

No words are adequate to express my feelings of love, affection and gratefulness to Rev. Fr. Paul Zahler, Director of the Oklahoma Benedictine Institute on Mental Retardation, U.S.A., with whom I undertook joint study tours to 27 countries to see for ourselves the work of special education institutions in those countries and have set up the International Institute on Mental Retardation, Inc., in Oklahoma. Fr. Paul has been an unfailing source of strength and support to me all these years, not only for our work in Kerala, but also for spreading the Three C's Concept everywhere and implementing it in his own institute in Oklahoma.

I am also Deeply indebted to the St. Gregory's Abby in Shawnee, Oklahoma, and the Benedictine community to which Fr. Paul belongs for all the help, support and facilities they have given to me in my work for the mentally retarded.

Last but not least, it is the very loving children, their parents and the dedicated and hard-working teachers and the untiring staff, and the vast group of well-wishers who continue to inspire me to further the development and welfare of the mentally retarded persons everywhere.

Trivandrum,  
October 29, 1989

Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, C.M.I.,  
*Director, Central Institute on  
Mental Retardation, Trivandrum*





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## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE THREE C's CONCEPT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED**

We start from our basic finding that everything in the world around us can be reduced to a few basic shapes and everything can be built from these basic shapes. A mentally retarded person can be educated and developed into a normal, useful, creative, versatile and socially acceptable human being by training him to know these basic shapes, make them using various kinds of material, select the required ones from a medley of shapes and then combine them to produce things of more complicated shapes. Through this process of learning, it is possible to make use of all the four cardinal human functions in a person - motor, psycho-social, language and cognitive - to develop his mind and body and the skills for enabling him to eke out an independent living and acquire a proper place in society. Our Three C's Concept of Special Education for the training of the mentally retarded (MR) in Kerala, evolved out of our 17 years experience, is built up on this basic concept that everything in this world can be reduced to shapes; that these shapes can become the alphabet in our educational system for the MR. The Three C's in our Concept represent the three stages of our system of training — comprehension, competency and creativity.

#### **THREE R's — AN OBSTACLE**

We have found that the conventional method of three R's in education, starting with the alphabet and numbers and built up mainly on them, militates against the mental handicap of the MR child and raises an insurmountable obstacle to his progress. Our experience in the field has convinced us that the most effective system of teaching MR children is based on the concept of making him comprehend the world through basic shapes and the colours which go with them.

The very first impression that an infant forms within him is of his mother who suckles, fondles, caresses and kisses him. All his five senses are stimulated by her involuntarily. To the child the impressions of his mother get reduced to basic shapes and colours. Her eyes appear as circles, nose as a triangle, ears as semi-circles, and forehead and the face itself as rectangles. (See diagram No. 1)

The child gradually sees the colourful sights and objects around him - the blue sky, the green leaf, the red sun, the yellow flower - and begins to identify and differentiate between them.





## BASIC SHAPES

Then as he grows further and begins to draw and scribble on the walls, on the floor and on paper, we find that his impressions of the world around him merge in shapes in his random scribbles. The basic figure that he seems to draw through these scribbles is the circle, however imperfect it may be. It should be noted here that the other basic shapes of a triangle, a rectangle and a square can be drawn within the shape of a circle. (See diagrams No. 2 and No. 3)

It is the child's capacity to form impressions of the world around him and reduce them to a few basic shapes and record them in scribbles that led us to the fundamental tenets of our Three C's concept. Once the child begins to scribble lines and/or draw circles, he will have vague notions about surfaces and shapes. The first step in Comprehension is taken - that of knowing shapes: the child has to be put through a process of familiarization with shapes. Lines, shapes, contours and colours are sketched and painted on the walls. He recognizes a triangle, a circle, a square and a rectangle and learns to identify and differentiate between them.

## KNOWING SHAPES

The child is then given three dimensional solids in the classroom and allowed to feel, handle and play with them. His awareness of things and concepts through shapes and colours grows. He is able to comprehend that the wheels of a cycle or a bus or a car are circular, the cycle frame is a triangle and a bus body is rectangular and particular things have particular shapes. (See diagram No. 4)

## MAKING SHAPES

A person who is able to know shapes thoroughly is taken to the second stage in our Concept - of training him to make shapes himself. He is given clay, wax, and plastics to mould them into shapes as he likes. He is encouraged to draw and paint different figures and shapes using different colours. (See diagram No. 5)

## ALPHABET AND NUMBERS

When he is fully aware of the differences in shapes and can draw them himself, he is taught to transform lines and shapes into letters of the alphabet. He can easily extend the two sides of a triangle and see the letter 'A' taking shape. By joining two adjacent semi-circles 'B' is formed; 'C' is a semi-circle and so on. A person who can recognize the difference between a triangle, a circle, a square and a rectangle can be initiated into learning numbers. He can be made to understand that a triangle has three sides and a rectangle four. He learns that a square has four equal sides, and a rectangle has two equal sides longer than the other two equal sides. Thus he is enabled to derive numbers from shapes and comprehend linear measurements by differentiating between triangles, rectangles and squares of various dimensions. (See diagrams No. 6 and No. 7)





## MULTI-SENSORY PERCEPTION

A further step in learning through the alphabet of shapes is taken by the mentally retarded person when he is in the carpentry workshop and in the cooking and home-management classes. He finds timber being cut and chiselled into specific shapes. That gives him the lesson that shapes can be made at will. When he makes things of different shapes, his limbs and senses are put to active use and his motor function and multi-sensory perception develop. In the cooking class, foodgrains, vegetables and fruits and cooking utensils, stoves of all varieties and other appliances become familiar to him. He sees, smells, and tastes the cooked food and other dishes. He identifies and names the various things and processes and thereby develops his language function - ability to express himself. Through interaction with his teachers and fellow students his psycho-social function develops and his self-confidence built up.

## MEASUREMENTS

Cooking and home-management classes also give the mentally retarded person ideas about measurements by volume and weight. He finds that they too are related to numbers and learns to spell them in litres and kilograms. He becomes familiar with heating and cooling and with temperatures. His cognitive function also develops.

From knowing the shapes in the carpentry class, he is encouraged to use saws, chisels and hammers in the workshop to make objects of different shapes. The selection of the proper tools from the tool board, the use of the correct tool in sawing, hammering, chiselling and planing timber into desired shapes and the co-ordinated use of his senses and limbs promote the child's intellectual development and the application of all the four human functions resulting in his conceptual growth.

## SELECTING AND ASSEMBLING SHAPES

Having advanced in making shapes, the MR person is now ready to be put through a course of selecting and assembling shapes. He applies the knowledge gained through his multisensory perception and functional growth to correctly select various parts including nails, nuts and bolts of different shapes and measurements kept labelled in the cycle shop to assemble a bicycle using proper tools chosen by himself and putting together the wheels and the frame and screwing in the correct nuts and bolts. Precision in work, awareness of the correct shape and measurement and of the role and importance of each individual part, their sizes and numbers and proper synchronization and co-ordination of all the four human functions are the demands made on the person's mental and physical faculties for the successful assembling of a bicycle. An assembled cycle thus becomes a milestone in the mentally retarded person's development. Thus his creative skills grow; ideas and concepts gained through these practical exercises become part of the student's normal thinking and awareness. (See diagrams No. 8 and No. 9)





Thus it can be seen that this method of training has been found to develop all the four cardinal human functions in a MR person, namely (1) the language function or the ability to speak, (2) the psycho-social function or the ability to involve oneself in social and human activity, (3) the motor function or the ability to move different parts of the body and (4) the cognitive function or the ability to think, discern, apprehend and know things in their correct perspective. It also enables the person to achieve functional co-ordination and help the various faculties (hearing, seeing and sensory motor) to function in unison. And when he reaches this stage and is able to assemble various shapes and produce different useful objects, the mentally retarded person gets a feeling of fulfilment and happiness and becomes more self-confident. There is a perceptible blossoming of his personality and he confidently moves forward to the next stage in our concept of the Three C's - that of Creativity.

## GROWTH OF SKILLS

The mentally retarded person's stimulated creative instincts and abilities are given opportunity for giving concrete shape to his ideas of making more complicated objects on his own. He goes through this stage with a full knowledge of different shapes and their mutual relation; thus he is able to make things of different shapes and colours and use his discriminating ability to select and assemble them for making objects and things of his choice. By then he will have acquired all the major skills, namely the basic living skill, the independent living skill, the community living skill and the employment skill, using all the four basic human functions and will have considerably overcome his mental retardation to become a useful, self-reliant and competent human being through social interaction with his teachers, fellow trainees and the community. (See diagram No. 10)

## SEVEN STEPS TO TOTAL DEVELOPMENT (See diagrams 11 through 18)

Under the Three C's Concept of Special Education we have worked out the most effective and systematic technique of imparting training in seven steps.

The first step is identification of a specific task and its analysis into meaningful components. To use a concrete example, let us take a particular task in gardening - planting a sapling in a pot. First of all, the trainee has to choose a proper pot from a variety of pots or containers of different shapes and sizes, made of different materials. He decides whether it should be a mud or a cement pot or a thrown-away tin or a plastic bucket. He also makes his choice of its proper size.

While selecting the pot, its shape gets identified in the mind of the mentally retarded; this is the second step. His ability to distinguish between different shapes and select the correct one grows and his capacity to take decisions and arrive at correct judgements on his own begins to develop gradually.

The third step consists in a person identifying the material with which the pot is made: of burnt clay or cement or metal or plastic; the student learns to discriminate its qualities from those of other materials. He learns the name of the





plant and identifies its distinct colour. He will soon know to identify and distinguish it from other kinds of plants. Thereby the trainee's cognition and basic knowledge improves; he also acquires a number of new words in the process. It now becomes easier for the trainer to teach the mentally retarded person the letters that make up the words that he has become familiar with and show how letters are arranged to form words and slowly and gradually unfold the entire alphabet before him.

In the fourth step the trainee is shown how to find out the measurements of the pot, its height, the diameter of its mouth and base, the height of the plant as well as to measure or gauge the difference in height that it gains during its growth. When he pours a particular quantity of water into the pot containing the plant, he also gets an idea of the quantity of volume. When he applies fertilizers or manure after measuring their quantity, he learns to gauge weight. Thus he is introduced into the world of numbers and linear, volumetric and gravimetric measurements and dimensions.

In the fifth step, when among a group of schoolmates and teachers, he daily waters the plant and applies manure and fertilizers and pesticides, the person not only develops his sensory motor function but also the other three functions - language, psycho-social and cognitive - through interaction and communication.

The sixth step is intended to develop his basic independent living skills. He gradually becomes adept in growing pot plants and finds that it is directly applicable to his living situation. When he sees the result of the application of his skill in the growth of several pot plants, he gains self-confidence and becomes happy and cheerful. He gets a sense of achievement when he sees the plants flowering or bearing fruit.

The culmination in the step-by-step training is the seventh step during which the achievement of Comprehension, Competency and Creativity through sensory motor function, language or verbal communication, psycho-social coordination and life-related academic knowledge and above all vocation-oriented skills acquired by the successful performance of a particular task is applied to new and more and more complicated tasks that will be faced by a mentally retarded person taking up a vocation or employment in real life situation. Thus total human development through multi-sensory perception and building up of mental and physical faculties is achieved.

The Three C's Concept lays emphasis on the three-cornered co-ordinated effort of the family, the school and the society in educating the MR person. We have found that the residential school for the MR estranges the person from his family and insulates him from the world around him. On the other hand, during his education in a day school, a mentally retarded person, while living with his family and participating in all the activities in his home, also gets the opportunity for multi-sensory perception and interaction with the society while going to and from the school.

## LIVING WITH FAMILY

The Three C's Concept lays stress on the intimate association of the MR person's family with his education and training and on the mingling and participation of the MR person with the other persons in his home and with the students in the





school in all their activities and recreation. In fact, training in sports and games including swimming and painting, dancing and music are an essential and inalienable part of the Three C's Concept and are intended to build up gregariousness, social cohesion, love of sports, sense of timing and synchronisation and above all functional co-ordination. It is worth mentioning here as examples the performances of dance and orchestral music by the students of Asha Kendram in Cochin and D.C.M.R. in Trivandrum, Kerala, India, which have won deep appreciation from all around and even from connoisseurs of arts. The students play up to 12 different instruments in an orchestra and also perform Bharata Natya.

Education under the Concept enables the MR person to know the world around him and to become socially acceptable through his fruitful interaction with the family and the society at large. The person thus grows into a normal, creative member of the society and becomes able to stand on his own legs and is ready to engage himself in a gainful vocation or take up employment.





### THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

'Home Sweet Home' goes the old song. It is true in the case of every human being; it is more so in the case of the mentally retarded (MR). Like charity, which begins at home, the care and development of the MR child, for that matter, of every child, should begin at home. This is the fundamental premise of our concept of and scheme for the Total Integrated Development of the MR child, which emerged out of our long experience in running schools and teacher training institutions in different parts of Kerala in India.

The family is the kingpin of all our schemes and programmes. The family and, more importantly, the parents of the MR child have to play a key role in his overall growth and development. In fact, the parents of the MR child and the teachers of the school to which he is sent have to go hand-in-hand in giving him education and training. They have to be partners in the child's progress towards normalisation and absorption in society.

#### NEGLECT OR TOO MUCH CARE

We find that in his family a MR child is either neglected and disowned and left to fend for himself or bestowed too much attention and pity and fondled and petted with extra-sympathetic care. Both these approaches are wrong and result in isolating the MR child from the family members and in turn from the society at large. The MR child will soon begin to feel that he is either unwanted in the home or that he is a burden to the family. If he is too much cared for, his mental and physical development will be slowed and stunted. And he will always start looking for a prop in all that he does and lose his capacity for self-reliance and independence in the process. The other children in the family will also resent the considerable greater parental care given to the MR child and begin to develop an aversion towards him.

The retarded child should be accepted like all the normal children in the family and encouraged to participate in all the activities within the limitations of his functional capacities and skills and mix freely with his fellow members on all occasions. In fact, the MR child should be treated in such a way by his family that he is not too keenly aware of his mental deformity and is able to play his role in his family and the society like an ordinary human being and should never be made to feel that he is the butt of ridicule or derision in any manner.

We have formulated these views on the basis of our intimate practical experience with a number of MR children and their family situations and parental approaches.

#### A FEW CASES

Twenty-year old Lata is a typical example of how a family's over-abundant care had made a MR child totally dependent and incapable of doing anything by





Diagram 1

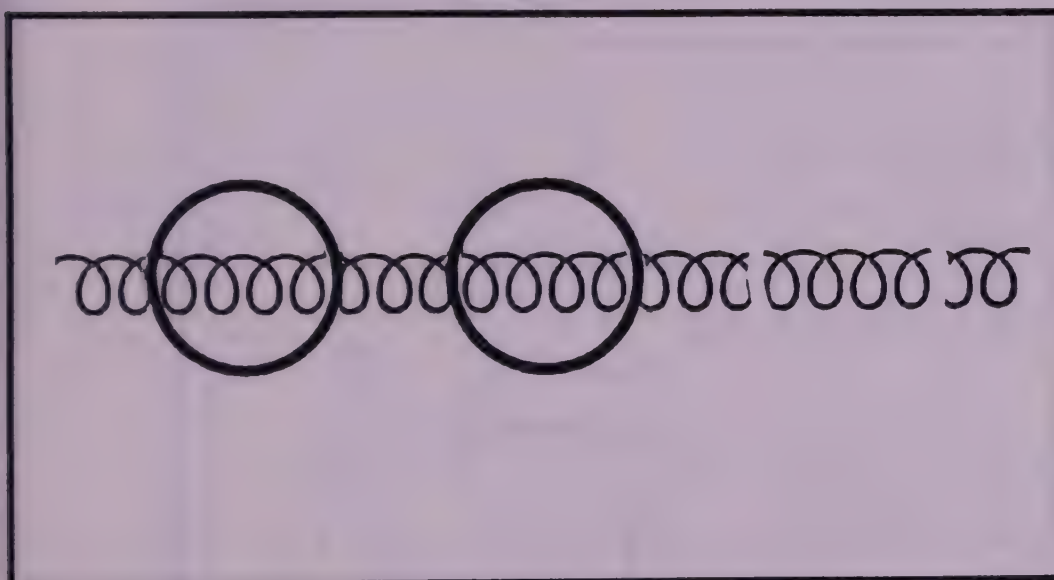


Diagram 2

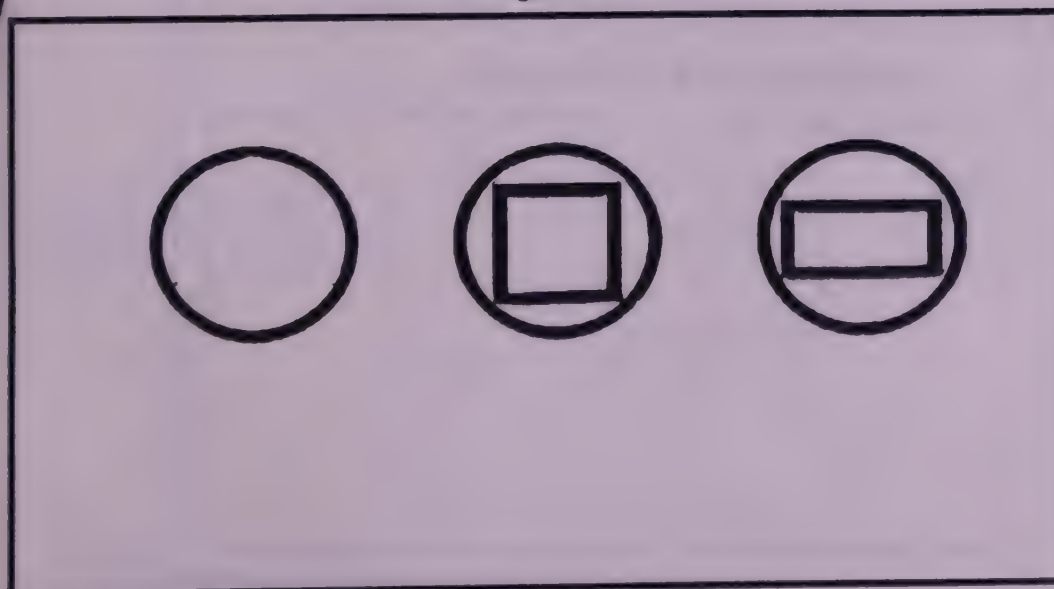


Diagram 3





## CONCEPT BUILDING

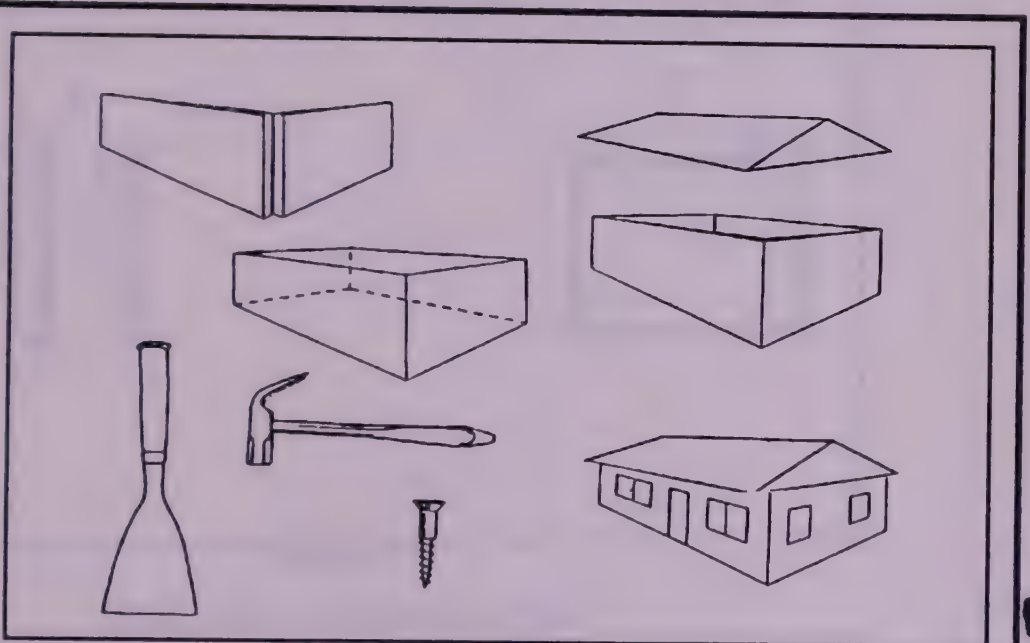


## KNOWING THE SHAPES



Diagram 4

## GIVING SHAPES AND FORMS



## MAKING THE SHAPES







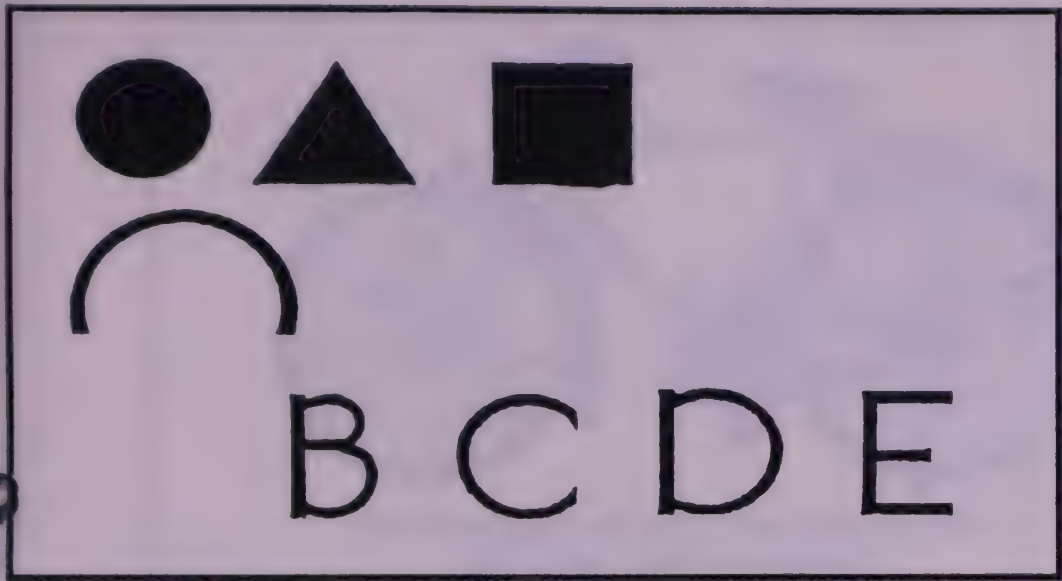


Diagram 6

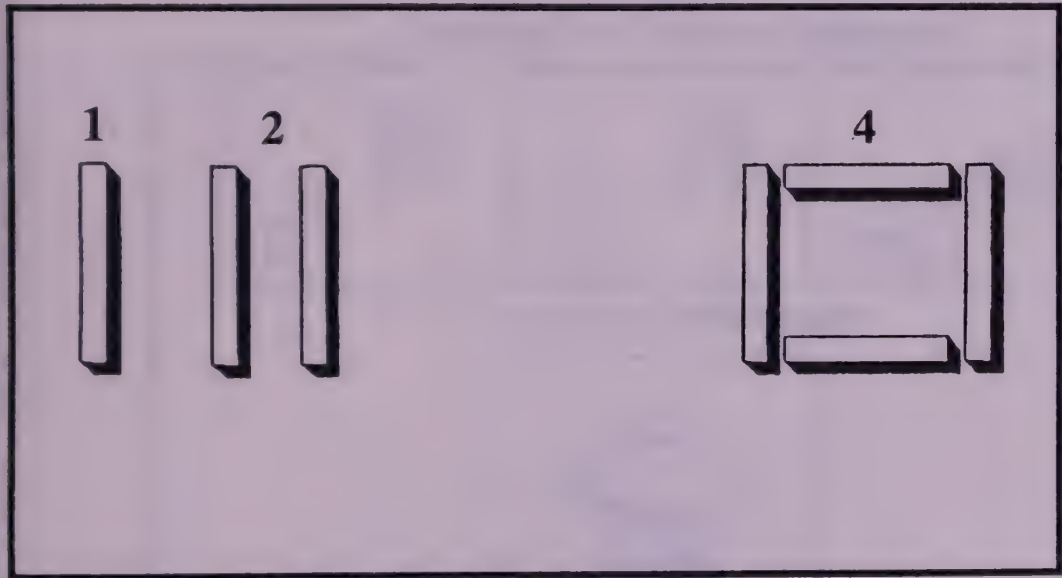
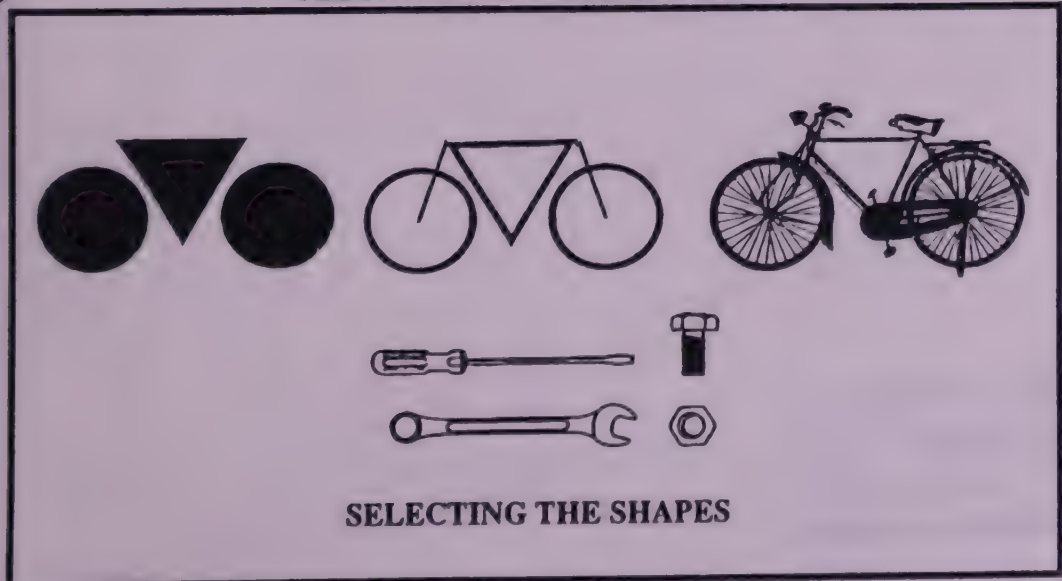


Diagram 7

SELECTION AND ELIMINATION



SELECTING THE SHAPES

Diagram 8

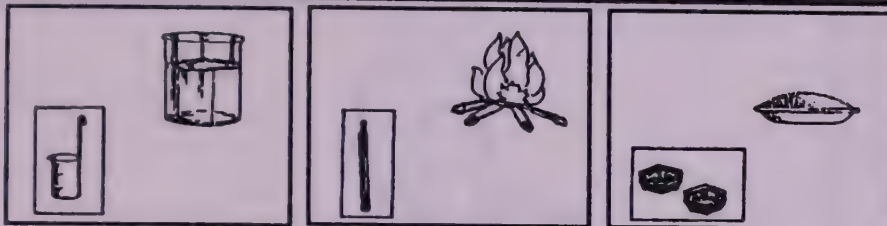




**ASSEMBLING A BICYCLE IS A MILESTONE  
IN TOTAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Diagram 9**

**COMBINATION OF MEASUREMENTS**



**COMBINING THE SHAPES**



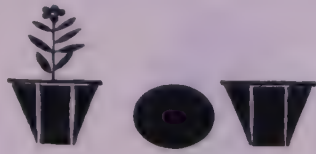
**Diagram 10**

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Bangalore-560034  
India**







# PLANTING SAPLING POT

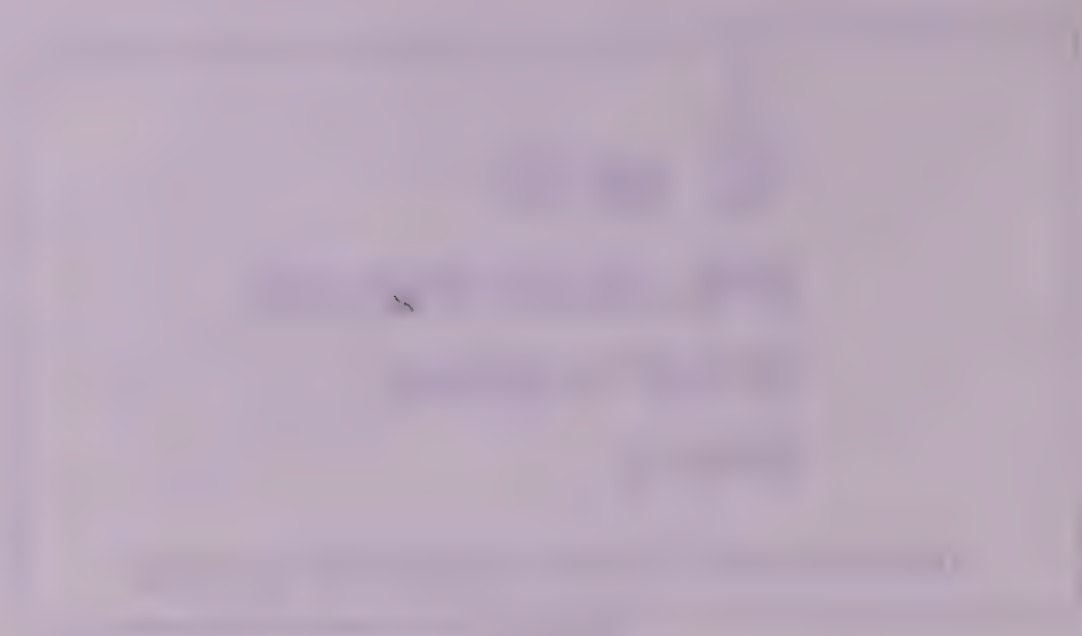
IDENTIFYING COMPONENTS OF A TASK

Diagram 11



A TASK CHOSEN - PLANTING IN A POT

Diagram 12







## SHAPES AND COLOURS

Diagram 13



CLAY

CEMENT

METAL

PLASTIC

LEAF

SIZE

COLOUR

STEM

## WORDS AND ALPHABET





**MEASUREMENTS:  
LINEAR, VOLUME AND WEIGHT**

**Diagram 15**



**FOUR FUNCTIONS**

**MOTOR**

**PSYCHO-SOCIAL**

**LANGUAGE**

**COGNITIVE**

**Diagram 16**







Diagram 17

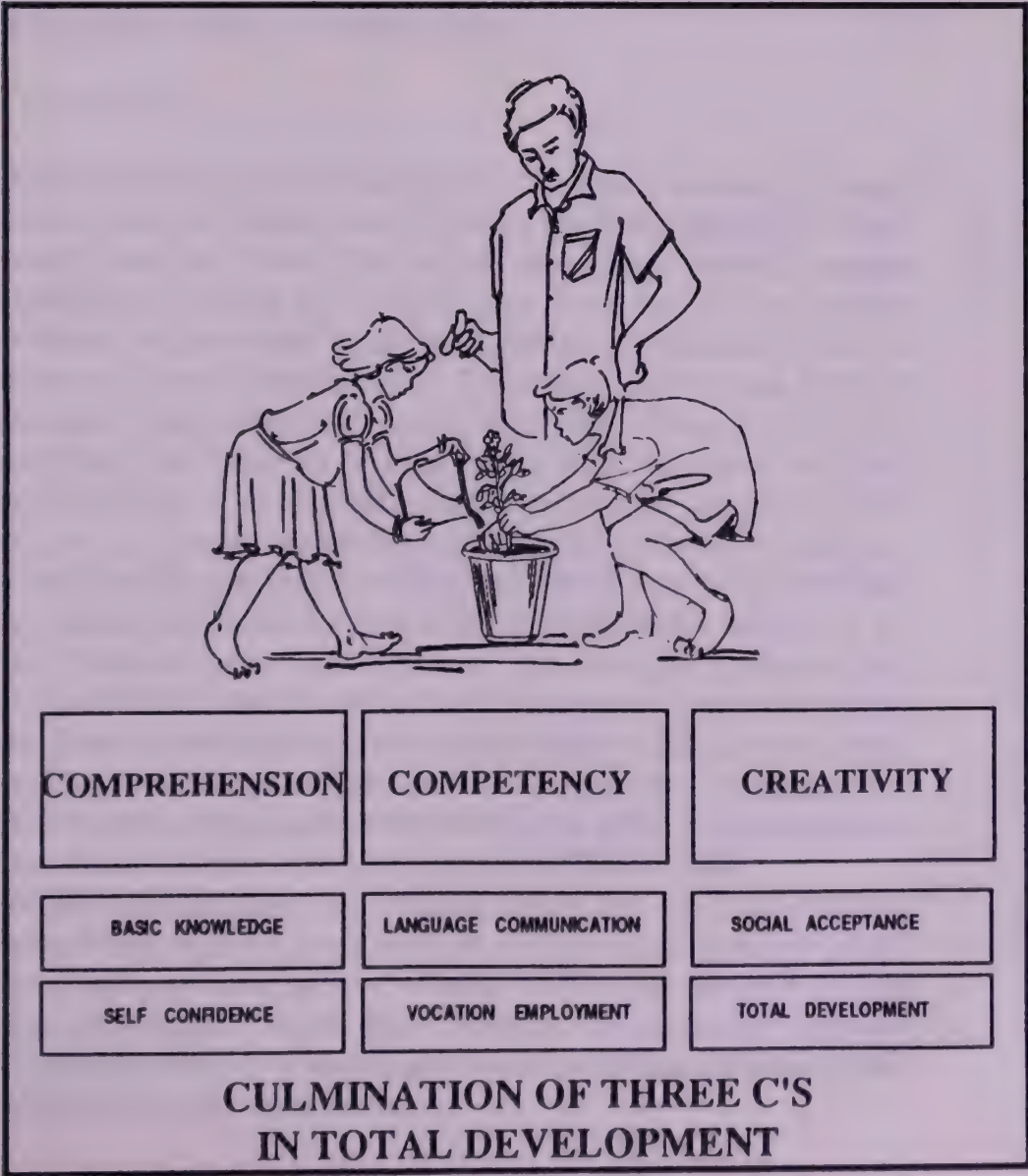


Diagram 18





herself. She was in that condition when she was brought to the Developmental Centre on Mental Retardation (D.C.M.R.) in Trivandrum a few years ago. But after one month at the Centre she could bathe herself and take care of almost all her small personal needs.

Another case is one mentioned by Dr. Glorine, a professor in one of our medical colleges. A medical doctor had sacrificed her professional career in order to devote her entire time to the care of her MR child. When she found that the child's development was not up to her expectations, she felt frustrated. A dejected parent will only further retard the growth of a MR child.

Eleven-year old Unni was taken along by his parents wherever they went but soon they began to give up social visits and outings when they found that their child had become a distraction in social gatherings. Thus the parent's withdrawal from society robbed Unni of all opportunities for social interaction and normalization.

A MR child should, however, be mentally equipped and prepared by the parents before he is given the opportunity to freely move among and mingle with people outside the family. The child should be able and confident to conduct himself well. Otherwise such social interaction will lead to embarrassing situations for the child and will bring about revulsion towards others.

## PARENTAL ATTENTION

The home and family of a MR child are his haven and mainstay. Parental attention may make or mar a MR child's future. We have found that a properly trained, knowledgeable family can play a very effective role in making a mentally retarded person a useful and normal member of society at large. It can become the fountain-head for his growth and enlightenment. Therefore, based on our findings, we have in the Central Institute on Mental Retardation in Trivandrum worked out a Family Education Programme. This programme is carried out in three different directions:

1. During every week-end six families from a particular region with their mentally retarded wards come to the Institute on prior appointment. As far as possible, the children, who come at a given week-end, should be those who suffer, more or less, from a particular handicap. The families attend detailed lectures by experts in different fields concerning mental retardation and view documentary films relating to the particular handicap common to the children present. The films give guidance to the families on how to handle their wards in order to achieve optimum beneficial results.

The participants are encouraged to raise questions for which clear and cogent answers are given. They also share among themselves their experience relating to their respective wards. This interaction adds to their knowledge, give deeper insight into their own children's cases and aids in building up their self-confidence.

They are asked to write down their ideas as to how they will handle a given case; their ideas are then analysed in their presence and necessary guidance given.

Once the families get back to their villages, a follow-up action is kept up through regular correspondence. They are also encouraged to get together from time to time, preferably in one of their own houses, and discuss problems concerning their wards and exchange their further experiences.





## COUNSELLING

The parents, who come to D.C.M.R. at Trivandrum without notice, are also cared for. They are given the benefit of a two-hour counselling programme.

ii. The second direction of our programme takes the form of one-day or two-day seminars at selected centres with the active support of service clubs and Government Health and Education Departments. Attendance by the maximum number of parents and other family members is ensured through various means including advance publicity. They are enlightened by lectures by experts and educational documentaries. Parents' sessions are an inalienable part of these seminars at which personal experiences are shared.

The parents are encouraged to meet again by themselves to form working groups and in due course to start inexpensive Day Centres at their place. Such centres have only week-end programmes in the beginning; gradually full-week programmes are arranged. We offer to these centres the services of teachers who have completed the one-year residential Teachers's Training Course for Diploma in Special Education for the Mentally Retarded conducted by our Central Institute at Trivandrum.

iii. The trainees undergoing the one-year Course at the Central Institute devote one full month to move around in the villages close to their own places of normal residence, visit families, identify the MR persons in their areas and offer specific counselling to the concerned families. Thus counselling is carried straight into the homes of the MR and a message of hope is spread from house to hamlet. The trainees also encourage parents to get together, share experiences and organize and run a group centre for the benefit of their wards.

Thus, undergoing the Family Education Programme by the family of the MR person is a *sine qua non* for his/her admission to our special education schools. Before a MR person is admitted, it is essential that his or her parents/guardian should have had the advantage of our family counselling. At the group-counselling sessions, we insist that each individual parent/guardian should meet and exchange his/her experiences with the others in the group. We also offer each parent/guardian suitable guidelines based on the experiences of parents in other parts of the world. And, finally, when the families are encouraged to start a Common Centre near their homes, their children are drawn out of the isolation in their homes and helped to mix with other MR persons in the locality. The MR persons are put through scientifically-drawn training programmes under the Three C's Concept designed to develop their functional levels and skills and encourage them to participate in sports and games. Even while going to and from the Common Centre, the MR persons will learn and improve personally and socially through the social interaction and encounters they perform with different persons and situations.





At our Asha Kendram Model Normalisation Centre for the Mentally Retarded at Cochin and the Developmental Centre at Trivandrum, we are fortunate to have a good degree of parental involvement. Through that we have succeeded in substantially promoting the total growth of a sizeable segment of pupils.

*he contents of this chapter were included in a paper presented by the author at the first International Conference on Family Support at Stockholm in August 1988*





## CHAPTER III

### TEACHER-TRAINING COURSE FOR DIPLOMA IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

It has already been stated that our basic approach in regard to the education of the mentally retarded person is that it should be a process of harmonious partnership between his teachers and parents and that the successful normalisation of the person and his absorption in society in which he lives will depend on the active involvement of his family in the process and the understanding between the family, the society and the teacher. Our one year's training programme for teachers, which has been shaped and reshaped by our experience of conducting 16 courses since 1980, is oriented to this approach. In sum, we visualise the teacher's role in the physical and mental development of the mentally retarded person as both complementary and supplementary to the roles of the person's family and community.

A competent teacher of the mentally retarded is one who is able to thoroughly understand the person, his family, his environment and the social milieu in which he grows and then devotes all his/her resources to achieve the maximum development of the mentally retarded person by building up in him optimum physical ability and mental agility and skills through the stimulation of full functional growth.

Our training programme aims at the building up of a competent teacher with a global perspective of the problems of mentally retarded persons, which we believe are universal, and a thorough grasp of the basic tenets and philosophy of making the mentally retarded a useful and productive member of his family and society. Verily rooted in the Three C's Concept, our Teacher's Training Programme has four phases:

1. Global Understanding
2. Structured Understanding
3. Non-structured Understanding, and
4. Integrated Total Understanding.

This four-phased programme makes co-ordinated, correlated and continuous use of the trainees' faculties and instruments for observation, involvement, planning, evaluation and practical application.

#### FIRST PHASE

We believe that the approach to tackling the problem of mental retardation and the prime target of the education of the mentally retarded persons are more or less the same all over the world: namely, their normalisation and full functional development and their absorption in their family and their society. However, the methods and techniques adopted for achieving this target might vary with different countries and societies depending on their climate, environment, tradition, history, culture, educational status of their families and societies and scientific and technological development. Even so, a number of these factors and aspects might be similar in two or more countries or common to them; therefore, techniques and





methods adopted in one particular place or country or society for the education of the mentally retarded and for the training of their teachers might be found suitable or applicable in other places, countries or societies, sometimes with appropriate modifications or adaptations.

It is on the basis of this premise that we have designed the first phase of our four-phased training programme for the teachers to enable them to form a comprehensive global view of the mentally retarded and their development. For the teacher-trainees to effectively acquire a full knowledge of the world scenario of mental retardation, make a comparative assessment of the methods and techniques adopted in various countries and imbibe the best of everything, they are exposed to a very large stock of mass communication material on the excellent work in other parts of the world and in other parts of our own country in regard to mental retardation, like books and journals, slides, documentary films and audio and video tapes, which our Central Institute and Information Centre on Mental Retardation at Trivandrum has built up over the years.

We have on our staff, teachers who have had the benefit of visiting many countries in Europe and the U.S.A. and participating in the programmes there for the mentally retarded. Lectures by them and exchange of ideas and views with them give the trainees, through person-to-person communication, closer and more intimate details of the educational methods followed in other parts of the world. Lectures by the experts in various subjects relating to the education and functional growth of the mentally retarded, like medical men, educationists, psychologists and communicators/media persons bring before the mind's eye of the trainees the subtleties and intricacies which they will face and will have to grapple with when they begin to involve themselves in the educational process of the mentally retarded.

The trainees form their own impressions of the world scene and make daily notes, which are corrected: they are also put through every day question-and-answer sessions with experts and group discussions among themselves, sharing and thoroughly analysing their impressions and views. At the end of this first phase the trainees will have a clear and comprehensive global picture of mental retardation and will be ready to enter the more practical second phase of structured understanding.

## SECOND PHASE

This phase is one in which understanding is gained by the trainees through direct contact and interaction and involvement with retarded persons and their teachers and parents, which are made possible within the four walls of the Centres at Trivandrum and Cochin and then through the writing of daily reports, group discussions, practical assignments and performance evaluations made by themselves. They actively involve themselves in the practical application of our Three C's Concept and acquire a correct perspective of the Concept and its techniques. The trainees find for themselves how the mentally retarded persons take the first step in comprehension by learning to know the basic shapes, become familiar with them, and identify and differentiate between them, handle and play with different shapes; then, go to the second step of making shapes, and finally move to the third step





of selecting the required correct shapes from several lots of them and putting them together to produce things of more complicated shapes.

The trainees involving themselves in the implementation of our Concept through its various steps or stages will realise how the mentally retarded person's five senses are stimulated, his dormant, disjointed or dithered powers of observation, identification, differentiation, discrimination, deduction and discretion are enlivened, sharpened and built up and how his awareness of things and concepts through shapes and colours grows. They see how he learns to transform lines and shapes into letters of the alphabet and how through shapes he is initiated into learning numbers and comprehending linear, volumetric and gravimetric measurements. At the carpentry workshop and the cooking and home management classes the trainees find the children learning that shapes can be made at will and becoming familiar with tools, implements, utensils, appliances and equipment, with foodgrains, fruits and vegetables, with the processes of heating and cooling and temperatures and with sawing, chiselling, planning and hammering and with volumes and weights. The trainees find that through these classes the mentally retarded person develops his language function through his multi-sensory perception and our multidisciplinary approach and that the person's co-ordinated use of his senses and limbs in making shapes promote his intellectual development, the application of his cognitive and motor functions and his conceptual growth. The trainees also find how the mentally retarded person applies his knowledge and skill acquired through his regular and continuous working with shapes to selecting parts and components of various shapes and sizes and successfully assembling complicated machines like a bicycle.

The trainees' involvement in the third and final step of our Three C's Concept helps them to see for themselves how a proper synchronization and co-ordination of all the four human functions of the person have been effected through the growth and normalisation of his personality is achieved and how he moves forward to the final stage of creativity with self-confidence and cheerfulness. The trainees will now be dealing with a person whose mental retardation has been considerable overcome and whose urge for creativity has been whetted and who with a full knowledge of different shapes and their mutual relation makes objects and things of his choice. By then the mentally retarded person will have acquired all the major skills using all the four basic functions.

In the second phase of Structured Understanding, the trainees watch and witness and participate in not only the mentally retarded person's functional growth and maximum development of mental and physical faculties, which are assessed continuously through their application in his activities and participation in sports and games including swimming and exercises and painting, singing and dancing but also the process of his gradual normalisation and social acceptance. They realise the importance of the role of the family and society in the normalisation process and the need for the child to live with his family and come to the school daily for communion with others on his way to and back from the school and for developing his language and psycho-social functions and self-confidence.

During the 'second phase' too, the trainees write their own daily reports and submit to the Director, participate in group discussions, share their views and





experiences and make their own self-critical analyses and evaluations. Each trainee will be given specific practice assignments with one or more groups of children and asked to tackle specific situations and circumstances. The performance of the trainee will be assessed and further guidance given by the Director/Instructors. At the end of the second phase, the trainees will have gained a clear understanding of the intricacies of the problem of mental retardation as existing in the area and of the validity and distinct advantage of the Three C's Concept using basic shapes vis-a-vis the traditional system of schooling based on the alphabet and numbers. The trainees will also be able to assess by themselves the mental and sensory growth of the mentally retarded persons.

### THIRD PHASE

The trainees, thus adequately equipped to win over the mentally retarded person and his family and having themselves gained self-confidence and a correct perspective of the Three C's Concept and a good grasp of its tools and techniques, move to the third phase of building up Non-structured Understanding. In this phase they go back to their own villages or towns and in a matter of weeks conduct a house-to-house survey and identify as many (at least 100) mentally retarded persons as possible in that area. They study each individual case thoroughly against the history and traditions of the mentally retarded person's family and his environment. The trainees also arrange get-togethers of the families, encourage them to frankly share their experiences relating to their wards, give necessary counsel to them, apply their newly-learnt methods and Concept to the mentally retarded persons and organize simple programmes of recreation and more such get-togethers for experience-sharing. In this phase too the trainees collect all possible data and prepare daily reports for review and evaluation during their fourth and final phase of training at the Centre at Trivandrum.

### FOURTH PHASE

In this phase of building up 'Integrated Total Understanding' the trainees return to the Central Institute at Trivandrum after their face-to-face encounter with the down-to-earth realities of the problem of mental retardation in their own rural or home-town setting and with their experience in tackling the problem using their newly acquired methods and techniques. They share and analyse among themselves their field experiences and compare them with those of other States in India and in other countries after going through more audio-visual sessions of tapes and films of work in other parts of the world and making detailed notes.

Further lectures by experts, question-answer sessions, study visits to a number of other special education schools for mentally retarded persons in the State and interaction with the pupils, teachers and parents in these schools, followed by their own evaluations and comparative assessments, writing consolidated reports of their entire training course, further group discussions and self-critical evaluations widen their vision, deepen their insights and sharpen their powers of observation



and analysis. The performance of each trainee in the different assignments given to him/her is strictly evaluated at the end of the year through a system of rigorous internal assessments and annual examination consisting of eight theory papers\* on various topics related to mental retardation and the Three C's Concept and practical tests† and his/her competence adjudged by external examiners for issuing the Diploma in Special Education to successful candidates.

The end product of the four-phased training programme based on our scientifically and systematically drawn-up curriculum and syllabus is a competent teacher, thoroughly tried and tested, both in the Institute and in the field, with a total integrated understanding of the various aspects of education the retarded person into a useful productive member and of the need for a well-nourished inter-relationship between the mentally retarded individual, his family, his teachers and the society in the environment he grows.

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#### \*THEORY PAPERS

I. History and Recent Developments of Mental Retardation-Perspectives: Regional, National and International. II. Nature and Needs of Mental Retardation. III. Curriculum Teaching and Management. IV. Psychology. V. Three C's Concept. VI. Mentally Retarded Person's Family and Community. VII. Functions and Skills. VIII. Therapeutics.

#### †PRACTICAL SUBJECTS

I. Individualised Training Programme; II. Teaching, Training and Stimulating the Mentally Retarded; III. Physical Training of Music, Arts and Crafts, Home Management and Occupational Skills; IV. Preparation of Teaching Aids.

*The contents of this chapter were included in a paper presented by the author at the Second National Seminar on Education of the Mentally Handicapped at the National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped at Hydenbad, India, in February 1989*





## CHAPTER IV

### LEARNING AND TEACHING MATERIALS

The goals of educating the mentally retarded are the same everywhere; their normalisation and absorption in their families and societies and engineering, catalysing and accelerating their development into useful, socially acceptable and creative citizens. However, the problems to be tackled and the techniques and methods to be adopted in the educational process aimed at the attainment of these goals may vary and may have to be adapted or modified according to the historical background, socio-cultural ethos, traditions, socio-economic situations and scientific and technological levels and age of the mentally retarded and of the families and societies amidst whom they live.

This premise holds good for even the various linguistic, administrative or socio-cultural regions within a country, the methods and techniques will have to be adapted, modified and made suitable even as between urban and rural communities. In India, the socio-economic and socio-cultural situations and the proportions of rural and urban communities in certain North Indian States like Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and even some South Indian States like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are entirely different from those prevailing in Kerala. Therefore, the programmes and schemes designed for the education of the mentally retarded in Kerala and the learning and teaching materials and equipment for the purpose will have to be suitably adapted when they are made applicable to other States or regions in our country or other countries.

#### UNIVERSALLY APPLICABLE

It must, however, be stressed that the concepts underlying the various educational schemes and programmes for the mentally retarded are universally applicable and valid in all situations. Therefore, our basic finding that everything in the world around us can be reduced to a few basic shapes and everything can be built on shapes is tenable in all kinds of socio-economic conditions or socio-cultural regions.

We have no doubt that our alphabet of shapes and colours used under our Three C's Concept for acquiring basic academic knowledge, achieving functional growth and imbibing skills leading to employment is the most effective means for the education and development of the mentally retarded everywhere. Any modification to our educational method, when it is sought to be applied to rural areas in our country as distinct from urban, is mainly required in the learning and teaching materials through which the mentally retarded are made to know, make, select and assemble basic shapes as a means to their growth and development.

#### IN ADVANCED COUNTRIES

In a highly industrialised and technologically advanced society like in the United States or in the U.K., or other European countries or in the Soviet Union or





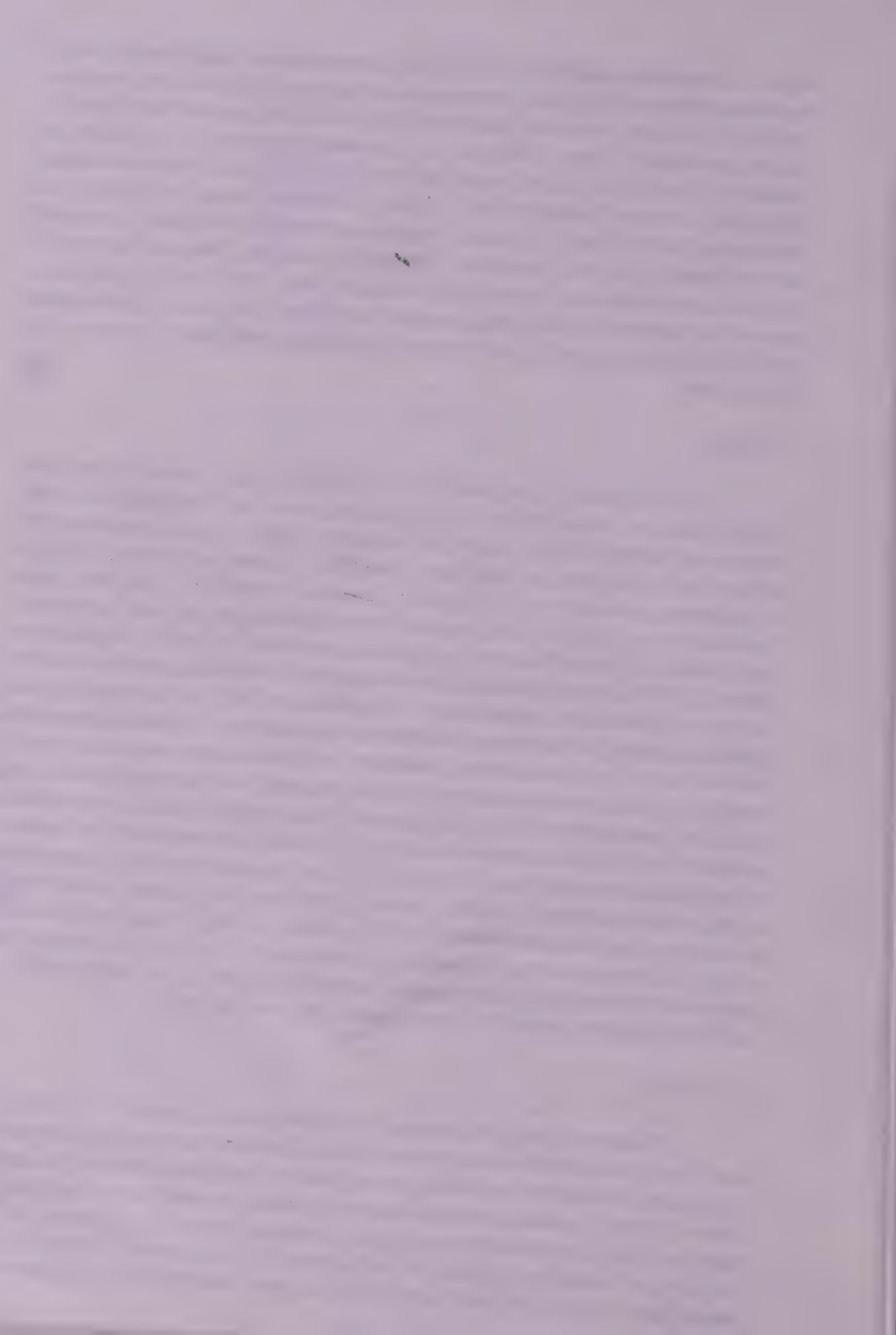
Japan, the mentally retarded, as much as the normal human beings, become familiar with sophisticated machines, instruments and equipment and electronic and laser-based and computer-controlled gadgets and most advanced facilities like Cable TV and picturephones in their daily lives and get ample opportunities to handle and use them. Therefore, in such countries the mentally retarded may know the shapes, distinguish between shapes and make objects of different shapes by selecting and assembling them to form a plethora of sophisticated machines and gadgets, unheard of or unknown in the less developed or backward countries. Thus they are able to acquire a knowledge at an elevated technological level. This is not possible in the case of less advanced, developing countries like India, with most of their regions still having technologically-primitive rural economies and largely illiterate rural populations.

## IN INDIA

It is pertinent to note here that our country, which consists of over five lakh villages and whose 80 per cent population is rural and dependent on a subsistence-agriculture-based economy and is still in a bullock-cart and cow-dung-fuel-using situation will have to adopt much simplified teaching and learning materials for imparting education to the mentally retarded, especially in our rural areas. According to a study on "The Situation of the Handicapped in India", conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences (as reported in the 'Indian Express', Cochin Edition, March 31, 1989), the total number of handicapped has been estimated to be 18 million out of an estimated total population of 788 million (in 1987) and the concentration of the handicapped in rural areas is higher than in urban areas. The study also reveals that the cases of people acquiring handicaps in childhood and congenital cases of disabled are higher in rural areas than in urban. the study lists various factors causing the higher concentration of the handicapped in rural areas as poverty, malnutrition and lack of facilities for corrective treatment. According to the same study, the number of mentally handicapped out of a total of 15.47 million handicapped in a population of 680 million (based on the 1981 Census figures) was 0.62 million, which would have risen to an estimated number of 0.72 million in 1987, a large proportion of whom is in the rural areas. Therefore, it is only proper that work for tackling the problem of the mentally handicapped or 'mentally retarded', as we would prefer to call them, is spread more and more to the rural areas in India.

## IN KERALA

However, it has to be pointed out that the case of Kerala is very different from that of the other States or regions of India. Unlike in other regions where there is a distinct demarcation between urban agglomerations and rural areas, the entire State of Kerala is a sort of homogeneous entity when viewed from a demographic angle and can be considered as almost one rural agglomeration (According to the last Census, 'Kerala has not gone far in the matter of urbanization'). Except for the mountainous terrain and backwaters, which together occupy almost two-thirds of





the State, the remaining land mass, Midlands, is almost entirely inhabited with a population density that is highest in India and among the highest in the whole world (654 persons per sq. k.m.).

However, even remote rural areas have, to some extent, an urbanized appearance. Almost all the rural areas in the State have been provided effective and well-planned services in different fields like education, medical facilities, drinking water supply, electrification, public distribution of essential foodgrains, sugar and kerosene, public transport, communication, etc. the road network extends into the interior areas and buses, cars, scooters and cycles play in most of the rural areas.

## LITERACY

The percentage of literate people in Kerala was 69.17 which was the highest in India, according to the last Census held in 1981. People are highly politically-conscious and read or make someone read out to them at least one newspaper. Women, who number more than men (1034 against 1000 males according to the 1981 Census), have a considerable higher educational level than their counterparts in other parts of India. Their literacy percentage was 64.48 (in 1981). This high female literacy has acted as a spur to social progress and children's education.

In the predominantly agriculture-based economy of the State, paddy, coconut, tapioca and banana from the major crops. Rubber, cashew, pepper and cardamom plantations are a special feature of the State's agriculture. Kerala is also the single largest producer of crops like ginger.

It has a total coastline of 590 kilometers and a number of lagoons, estuaries and backwaters. Fishing is the main occupation of people in the rural areas bordering the coastline. Fisherfolk represented 3.13 per cent of the State's population in 1981. Fish produced in the inland ponds, brackish water areas and reservoirs come to about 8.5 per cent of the State's total fish production. Their marine fisheries production is estimated at 23 per cent of the country's fish production.

In the industrial sphere, Kerala is backward, with a majority of its industries still remaining traditional and rural or cottage-based, like coir, cashew and weaving.

The State is blessed with 45 rivers and much larger number of rivulets.

All the above mentioned facts relating to Kerala have been detailed here so that based on the socio-economic and environmental background, a realistic approach is worked out regarding the deducational materials for the mentally retarded of the State. The emphasis here is that these materials should be quiet familiar to the mentally retarded persons in their daily lives. They should be designed keeping in view the familial and societal realites of the households and using indigenous natural and material resources.

## LOCALLY PROCURABLE

The very environment — natural and socio-economic in Kerala is stimulating for one who tries to discover naturally and locally procurable learning and teaching materials and is conducive to the educational system based on the alphabet of shapes





and colours for the mentally retarded starting from the cradle and within the hearth and the home. Simple shapes and colours emerge before the mentally retarded person's eyes not only from the face of his/her mother and those of other family members but also from the doors and windows of the cottage and the household furniture and utensil. The impression of a rectangle is formed from the doors and windows, the walls, the mat used for sleeping on the floor, the cot, the table, and the stool and the dhoti (loincloth) used by both men and women; that of a circle emerges from the plates and other vessels used for serving food and triangle from the plantain leaf used for taking food.

As the child grows and stirs out, it sees the erect, cylindrical, single trunk of the coconut tree and the other multibranched trees and their fruits, flowers and leaves and learn to differentiate between them. The coconut tree, from which Kerala is supposed to have taken its name, itself is a rich repository of things of different shapes, the oval shaped, green coloured, unhusked coconut and the round shaped, brown coloured dehusked coconut, the triangular green coconut leaf, the conical covering of the flower bunch and the straight rib of the coconut leaf. The oval shaped mango and papaya, the ball shaped guava and brinjal, the cylindrical cucumber, the conical lady's finger, bitter gourd and snake gourd and the oval shaped, jack tree leaf used for taking kanji (rice gruel) are all simple, readily-available materials used in the daily lives, which repeatedly impart correct and indelible impressions of different shapes and colours to the retarded minds. The constant and continuous handling and use of these fruits and vegetables and other plant materials as food and in food preparations and dishes like curries, pickles and jams and for various other domestic purposes enable the uses to differentiate between them and understand their different uses and the processes involved and thereby also develop their motor, language and cognitive function.

## ENVIRONMENT

Outside the home, the circular shape of the village pond and of the drinking water well, the rectangular sides of the gabled, thatched or tiled roof of village house, the rectangular or circular shape of the temple, the conical spire or the triangular facade of the village church and the dome shape of the village mosque make deep impressions of various basic shapes. The use of tender coconut water for quenching thirst, or ripe mango leaf or neem (vep) twig for cleaning teeth, of water in the well and pond for drinking, washing utensils and clothes and bathing, of the coconut leaf rib for tongue cleaning, of the bundle of coconut leaf ribs as broom for sweeping and cleaning, of the intertwined dried coconut leaves for thatching house roofs, of the various parts of the coconut tree for burning as fuel and of coconut shell; in making handicraft wares instil even in retarded minds lessons about the multifarious uses to which natural resources can be put and about sanitation and clean environment, about burning and cooking and about handicrafts. Children in the rural areas get their first lessons in mechanics and dynamics when they see pulleys being used to draw well water in buckets, bullocks used for ploughing and driving carts, wheels being used for twisting coconut yarn, irrigating fields, crushing copra and churning out oil and the





elephants being used to draw huge logs. The engagement of grown-up mentally retarded children in some of the simpler operations among the above-mentioned, like drawing water from the well, watering plants, cattle-grazing and coconut-fibre wetting and weaving helps in their normalisation and in improving their functional growth and developing their skills to become useful, productive members of society.

For the physical and mental growth of the mentally retarded, sports and games are recognized as an inescapable part of the educational process. In the villages in Kerala materials are easily and readily available for local sports and games like 'Kno Kno', 'Kabaddi', 'Kilithattu', 'Kuttiyum Kolum', 'Thalapanthu', etc.

Workshops and assembling shops in the schools for the mentally retarded based on the aforesaid processes and operations in daily life and on the learning teaching materials chosen from the readily and easily available resources like those mentioned earlier are being run in the centres set up by us adjoining Alleppey, Kozhikode, Palai and Kottayam in Kerala. These have been found effective in the education of the mentally retarded based on the Three C's Concept.

*The contents of this were included in a paper presented at a National Seminar on Mental retardation of the Thakur Hariprasad Institute on Mental Retardation in April 1989*



## CHAPTER V

### BETTERING THE QUALITY OF LIFE

The efficacy and impact of the Three C's Concept in helping to better the quality of life of the mentally retarded was studied by us over the years at the two centres run by us, Asha Kendrum in Cochin and the Developmental Centre for Mentally Retarded (D.C.M.R.) at Trivandrum. The results have been highly encouraging and worth mentioning.

The primary aim in education the mentally retarded persons should be and has been under our system their normalisation and absorption in their families and their communities and their consequent active involvement in the social and economic life of their families and communities and ultimately to enable them to eke out their own means of livelihood for independent living as useful and productive citizens. In contradistinction to the chief purpose of academic education of normal persons, namely the building up of knowledge and academic learning for intellectual and professional pursuits, the goal of special education for the mentally retarded, who are intellectually sub-normal, is to develop their human functions and basic living skills necessary in the home and the community with emphasis on ecological validity. The foundation of such a system of special education has to be firmly laid by concentrating on their vocational training that will lead to employment or occupation, even if it means the side-tracking or submerging of purely literary or abstract academic knowledge which has no direct or immediate application to the life of the mentally retarded. Our Three C's concept has been evolved and built-up on this basic tenet and philosophy. Its goals and objectives are functional and community-referenced and directly applicable to daily living situations.

### VIRTUES AND VALUES

Through the application of this concept we have found that it has been possible not only to build up in the mentally retarded the four human functions and consequently develop essential living skills that will enable them to gain occupation or employment but also acquire optimum academic knowledge related to life and living. Such a conferment of twin benefits, namely vocational skills and vocation-oriented basic functional academic knowledge, on the mentally retarded has been found to instil several desirable virtues and values in them and thus help in remarkable improving their quality of life.

What is the Three C's Concept? (Please refer to Chapter I) when a mentally retarded person successfully goes through the three stages, he realises his potential to be like any normal human being capable of working and turning himself into a bread-winner.

The mentally retarded person's participation in age-appropriate games and sports including swimming as well as in painting, dancing and music also help in his socialisation and interpersonal communication and in the development of personal discipline, orientation and mobility skills. He is taught to play various musical





instruments and present instrumental musical items as a member of an orchestral group. We have formed one such orchestral group of mentally retarded persons at Asha Kendram, which has performed before public audiences at several places in Kerala to their pleasant surprise and delight. We are forming another such band troupe in Trivandrum.

### THREE R's

We have experimented with both the systems of education, namely the one through the application of the Three R's and the other through the application of the Three C's Concept and have convincingly and conclusively found that through the Three C's Concept based on working with shapes, the mentally retarded person moves directly towards a vocation much more quickly in a more economical way and with much less intellectual effort. He becomes familiar with life's processes and successfully goes through the various steps needed to make an independent living simultaneously developing his personality. When the mentally retarded person develops his functions through the Concept and works with wood, metal and other materials in creating newer and newer things, he gains a sense of achievement and fulfilment. He finds that his life becomes fruitful and useful not only for himself but also for his family and the community at large.

### DIRECTLY TO VOCATION

If the main purpose of schooling is for the person undergoing it to acquire for himself enlightenment and knowledge and a useful position in the home and in the community and an occupation or profession that is gainful to himself and worthwhile to the society at large, it certainly acquires much more time and more money to achieve through the usual routine Three R's-based academic system of learning and schooling having little application to life's realities and which is not directed to imparting daily living skills. A person's progress in education based on letters and numbers is through words and language and from the abstract to the concrete and therefore much slower whereas through shapes the progress is quicker and tangible because human function and skills are directly developed through the Three C's Concept. The mentally retarded person actually loses confidence and becomes frustrated when he is put through a system of imparting academic knowledge based on literacy and numeracy with which he struggles and strains every nerve and yet finds it inordinately difficult to grasp. Whereas a person takes a period of ten years of schooling and two years of pre-vocation training to move towards a vocation under the Three C's Concept of education in a fewer number of years. Consequently the expenses of the mentally retarded person's family for his training becomes much less. Life becomes more meaningful and gainful to the mentally retarded person in a much shorter period of education and his living becomes more enjoyable and pleasant. His conceptual and perpetual growth is quickened and his intellectual processes get energised through the acquisition of proficiency in activities connected with everyday living. he learns to take decisions more quickly and soon





divests himself of dependence on others and tries for maximum independence in the minimum time and with much less effort.

When he is trained under the Three C's Concept to assemble or repair a bicycle and later a motorbike or scooter and ultimately even a car or run a shop or a milk booth independently (We have recently set up a milk booth at our D.C.M.R in Trivandrum which is run by mentally retarded persons for the first time in India) and thereby earn money and eke out his own means of livelihood, he will feel proud that he is productive like others and useful to himself and his family and society. When his parents and other members of his family happily realise that their mentally retarded child or scion has become able and capable to stand on his own legs and live on his own and has become useful, their attitude towards him undergoes a sea-change for the better and thus he gains social acceptance and social relevance. He realises his own identity, individuality and personal independence and even responsibility to himself, his vocation, his family and community.

Thus when the mentally retarded person's mind and physique develop and his functions and skills grow towards the target of a vocation in life, his values in life and standard of living are also elevated to a higher level. The quality of his life is enhanced when he is able to stand on his own and finds himself self-supporting. He derives joy and pleasure in his life and gains a feeling of usefulness in living.

*Some of the contents of this chapter have been included in a paper to be presented by the author at the 9th Asian Conference on Mental Retardation at Bangkok, Thailand, in November 1989*



Encl: No. 1.

Brief Report on starting 75-centres  
in Kottayam District. July 25/58.

## **Special Education Near To Home**

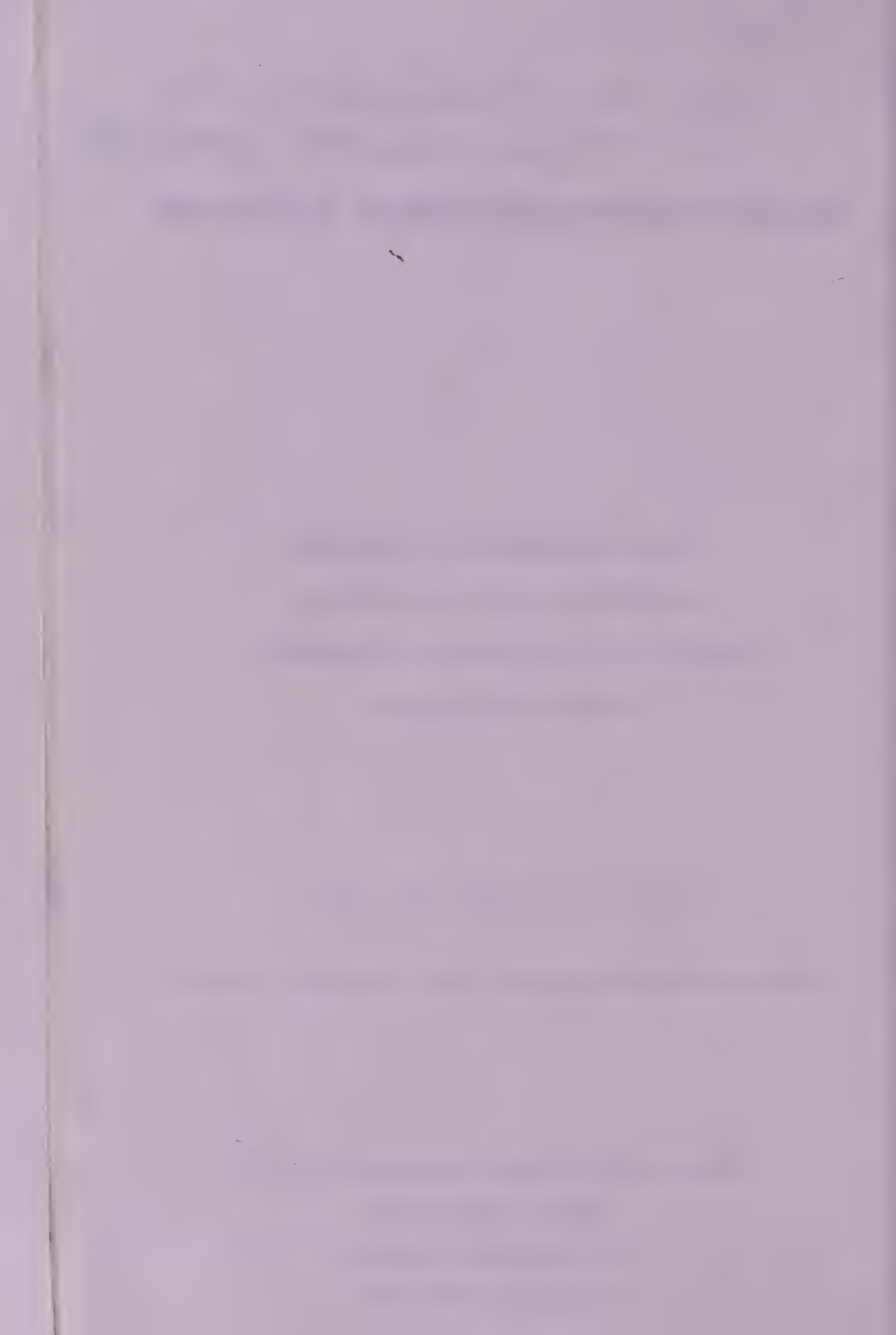
If the education of mentally  
retarded children is to be  
fruitful, training centre should be  
near their home

REV. FR. THOMAS FELIX, CMI

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Central Institute and Information Centre on  
Mental Retardation,  
D. P. I. Junction, Jagathy,  
Trivandrum—695 014.





Central Institute and Information Centre  
on Mental Retardation

A Treatise on the Institution

Published by

Central Institute and Information Centre on  
Mental Retardation, Jagathy, Trivandrum-14

First Published June, 1988

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Step by Step

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Limping into the Rythm of life

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REV. FR. THOMAS FELIX C. M. I.  
Director

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June 25, 1988 was an auspicious day when Kottayam District found a place in the pages of the history of special education for the mentally retarded. Kottayam is the first district which puts into practice the idea of giving training to mentally retarded children in centres near their homes. At the meeting to be held in the centre which is being started under the auspices of the Rotary Club at Kottayam, the District Head quarters, Smt. Ram Dulari Sinha, Governor of Kerala conducted the joint inauguration of the centres at Changanacherry, Vaikom, Palai and Kanjirapally.



### **A Long Awaited Dream Comes True**

By inaugurating this Project, Smt. Ram Dulari Sinha, the Governor of Kerala, has done a job which was eagerly awaited by voluntary organisations like the Rotary Club, Lion's Club, Y.M.C.A. and the Red Cross who work for social progress and by the families and relatives of mentally retarded children throughout Kottayam district. On that day the efforts of the officers of the health department in this district bore fruit. Sri. P. I. Varghese, D. M. O, Kottayam Sunny, Fr. Walter, Prof.





Sanoo Master, and Shri. Frank Mathew, and above all, both the former District Collectors of Kottayam have reason for rejoicing. Shri. O.C. Vincent who was District Collector in 1987 and Smt. Lissy Jacob who was District Collector in 1988 share the credit between themselves.

### **School Should Be Near Home**

The idea that the training for mentally retarded should be given near to their homes has materialised through constant work. If mentally retarded children are to be trained effectively, they should be able to go to a nearby school. A centre near to home means a centre in each panchayat which is the lowest unit of administration. Anyone can easily understand the necessity of forming a centre in one's own panchayat. The services in such a centre can easily be made available. The expenses for special education will be the minimum and the result maximum. The fact that, at present, a few centres are



functioning here and there and that in Kottayam District, there are centres like Madonna Special School. St. Paul's New Life, Asha Nilayam, Martha Bhavan, Shalom etc is not





over looked. However, these centres have not been established to implement the idea of forming centres for mentally retarded near to the homes and are not enough to put into practice that idea.

Only by establishing at least one centre in each Panchayat can the education of mentally retarded be made a success. They should also be able to use the bus and other means of transport of the locality and to mix constantly with the local people. They will acquire social awareness through the church near their house, temple, near the school, offices their own land etc. The discipline obtained during day time from training centres, the care and affection received from their family members, the social awareness earned while mixing with society all these are factors that expedite the growth and development of children. In short, they have to get grasping power, ability etc. from the surroundings in which they live. This is the principle laid down in the syllabus known as "Three C's Philosophy" used effectively for the education of the mentally retarded. The well thought opinion of Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, who formulated this scheme is that if mentally retarded children are forced to stay in far off boarding schools, they will not get satisfactory improvement. They will also miss parental involvement.

### **Theory to be put into Practice**

Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, CMI is the founder and Director of the Central Institute and Information Centre on Mental Retardation. He gives authoritative lead to the activities and education connected with mental retardation. The Central Institute is actively engaged in focussing the attention of society to the life of the mentally retarded and in producing trained personnel competent to give these children scientific and extensive training. The Institute considers that there should be trained personnel in each Panchayat. A good number of trained hands have passed out from the Central Institute since 1981. The 14th batch of training commenced on July 4, 88. When there are trained personnel in each Panchayat, they or voluntary organisations will be able to start training centres.





It is the trained persons who have gone from the Institute who are working in about 50 centres in Kerala. The D.C.M.R. in State capital and Asha Kendram at Ernakulam are centres directly run by this Institute.

A foot-step has been made in Kottayam District in the path of realisation of the plan to start schools in each Panchayat. Schools are being started in Kottayam district as a result of co-ordinated and intensive effort.

### **Growth of Soumya Mol helps promote new School**

There is a special reason for selecting Kottayam District in the first instance. It was Shri. O. C. Vincent who was District Collector last year who gave the administrative lead for this proposal and accepted the suggestion of the Central Institute. What prompted him was the development achieved by Soumya Mol, 5 year old girl who gets her training from Asha Kendram, Cochin. Shri. O. C. Vincent is a close relative of Shri. Frank Mathew, father of Soumya Mol. Therefore, he got the opportunity to understand directly the development of Soumya Mol. He had thus a clear vision about the success of the programmes at Asha Kendram. When constant pressure was exerted on the Central Institute to start a centre in each taluk in Kottayam District, Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, and Shri. Frank Mathew together met the District collector and requested the assistance of Government agencies. What he stated then was that the development achieved by Soumya Mol should be available to each child in Kottayam for which he would give all assistance and co-operation, He called Dr. P. I. Varghese, D. M. O. to his house and enlisted his co-operation. Then, Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix and others met the D. M. O. and explained to him everything. The D.M.O. also agreed that the idea was good.

### **Information Passed On To Officers**

A conference of health visitors, health workers and other employees of the health department was convened by the D.M.O. on May 6, 1988. A seminar was conducted in the afternoon under the auspices of the Central Institute in which Prof. M. K. Sanoo Master also spoke.



Lucid exposition of all aspects of caring for the mentally retarded with the aid of documentary films, and cultural programme by the children who came from D.C.M.R. Asha Kendram and Vikas Vidyalaya, gave the officers of the health Department a new awareness. Thereafter, the D. M. O. as desired by the Central Institute issued instructions to all the health workers of the District that they should send to him within one month statistics of the mentally retarded persons and their addresses. The officers worked at panchayat level and collected details of about 480 persons. The D. M. O. entrusted that list to the District Collector who transferred the same to the central institute.

### **Slight Delay**

From a rough survey, an idea about the number of mentally retarded persons in Kottayam District had been obtained. The Central Institute decided that the activities in Kottayam District which is a land full of hilly tracts and scanty means of transport, should atleast be talukwise. But, some delay occurred in starting work connected with that since Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, director of the Central Institute was out of station for some time, and Shri O. C. Vincent, District Collector was transferred to Pathanamthitta.

### **Smt. Lissy Jacob and Shri P. I. Varghese**

When Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix learned about the transfer of the District Collector, Kottayam he was at first very much worried. He doubted whether there would be any hindrance to the proposed programmes at Kottayam due to the absence of Shri. Vincent who was always ready to work for the mentally retarded. However, Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, together with Rev. Fr. Walter decided to meet the new district collector Smt Lissy Jacob. When they met the new District Collector, she also showed keen interest in this matter as the previous District Collector. It was indeed the blessing of God, the All Mighty. Accordingly, one-day-seminars were fixed at Changana-acherry, Kottayam, Kanjirapally, Palai and Vaikom. Dr. P. I. Varghese, D. M. O issued a circular to his subordinates to inform the parents of mentally retarded children about this. The central institute had collected more information about many,





families in the District as a result of their efforts for about 5 years. Those families were also given information about the seminars directly by the Institute.

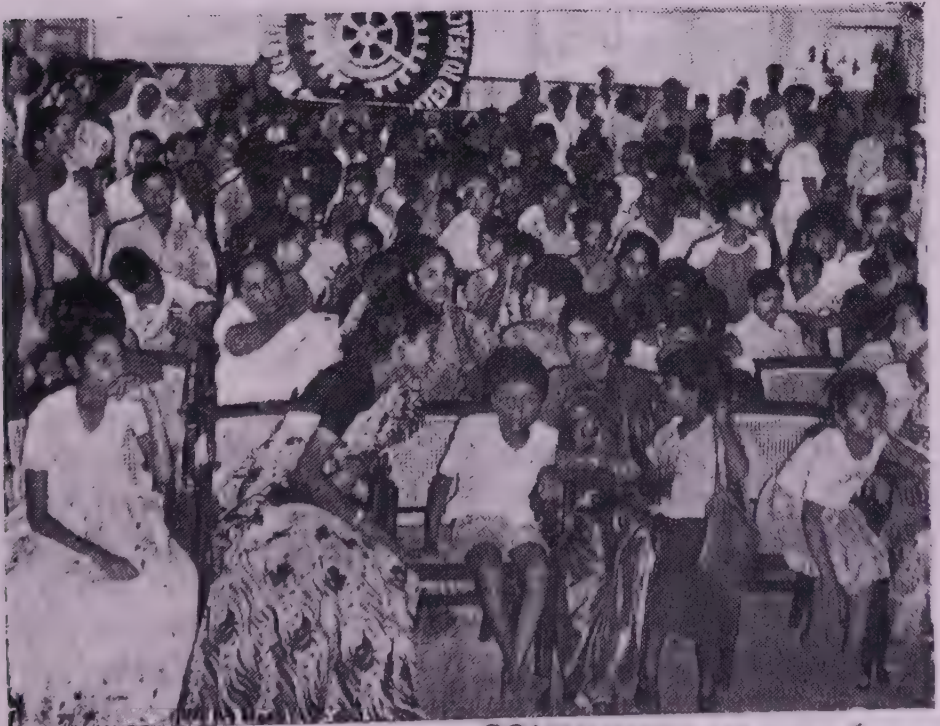
The news papers of Kerala also gave wide publicity about the seminars, and thus news about the seminars reached the public.

### **Voluntary Organisations Come to the Scene**

Individual organisations had undertaken the financial responsibility of conducting the seminars in the taluks. The organisations came forward when Dr. P. I. Varghese convened a meeting of well known organisations of Kottayam. The Rotary clubs at Kottayam, Changanacherry and Palai, the Lion's club at Kanjirapally and the Red Cross at Vaikom undertook all responsibilities of conducting the seminar with their usual readiness to serve the people.

### **C I I C's Contribution**

There is no intension to deal here with the strenuous efforts of the Central Institute in the conduct of the seminars since it



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is our primary responsibility. However, the parents of mentally retarded children should also know about those efforts. Let us therefore say something about that. For each seminar, the staff and teachers of the Central Institute, the children of D. C. M. R. and Asha Kendram run by the institute who have developed as artists and the children and staff of vikas Vidyalaya at Kottayam-functioning under Fr. Walter-altogether totalling above 70 had come inspite of several inconveniences and done their prominent share of work. Eventhough those were important days sofar as the institute was concerned, since it is the story of the private activities of this institute it is not detailed here.

The D. M. O was ready to give all help to the institute. He assured to give accommodation in the Government boarding houses of the District

The Institute team stayed at the building owned by the Lions Club in which the Vikas-Vidyalaya was housed. Lady teachers and girls stayed on the first floor and on the ground floor stayed the male teachers and boys. The practice was to get ready and start from Kottayam early morning before sunrise to the taluks where seminars were held. There was every likelihood of such preparations and journeys being delayed by inconvenience. There were instances when water was not available during afternoon and even after midnight. The 70 odd individuals from the Institute gladly suffered all in convenieces.

The difficulties experienced by the institute authorities to prepare the mentally retarded children in time were many. The children had to be awakened before 4 a. m.

### **It Was God's Grace**

The first seminar on October 12, was at Changancherry. The Co-workers of Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, thought that it was a favour bestowed upon him by the All Mighty because it was at Changancherry that he started his fight against mental retardation. It should be remembered that Asha Bhavan at Changanacherry had been started earlier by Fr. Felix. It was not accidental that it was Sanoo Master who spoke from his heart for the mentally retarded who inaugurated the seminar



at Changanacherry. Shri. P.J. Jacob and family from changan-cherry, attended the seminar. Shri. Frank Mathew, Kottayam and other well wishers of the institute did their job creditably.

### **A New Knowledge**

In each seminar, presentation of thesis, speeches and exhibition of slides, pictures and photos were conducted. Informative classes were regular programmes. Boards showing "Three C's Philosophy" were exhibited colourfully. Each programme of the seminar was simple and easily understandable. Another important item was awareness programme by the children of D. C. M. R, Asha Kendram and Vikas Vidyalaya and their parents.

The seminars enhanced the awareness of the parents of Kottayam. With the contact programme with the developed children in the afternoon, there came to the minds of those parents a new sunrise of knowledge.

### **Execution Comes From the Heart**

As the parents came to know that if the required training is imparted, their children could also get overall development, they began to think how that could be achieved. At each seminar, hundreds of families arrived with their children. The health workers and executive officers extended their hearty cooperation. Dr. P. I. Varghese worked day and night and gave his leadership in each seminar. At Kottayam and Vaikom, Smt. Lissy Jacob, District Collector came and directly took over responsibility. At other places, her subordinates came and gave the lead

### **Readiness That of Organisations and Individuals**

After each seminar, the parents of the mentally retarded met Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, and exchanged their joy with him. They enquired how their children could also get development as the children of D. C. M. R. and Vikas Vidyalaya. With tears of joy in their eyes, they told him that they were prepared to do anything to achieve their ambition, however difficult it may be. The idea that there should be teachers trained from the Central institute thus cropped up.





The Central Institute authorities requested them to find out people from the Taluks who are willing to undergo the training

A short term training course of three months duration was then formulated. There was a speciality in the above training scheme. The training should be for four days a week in the Central Institute and on Fridays and Saturdays the trainees should work with the children conducting the training and practical training together. The inner vision and achievement the trainees got were far superior. Organisations and individuals came forward to find trainees, and to accept financial responsibility.

### **If There is a Will, There is a Way**

4 persons from Kottayam and 2 from Palai, were sent by the Rotary Club of the respective places, for training. The Child Welfare council sent 2 persons from Vaikom. Since there were no persons ready from Changanacherry due to special reasons, Shri. P.D. Thomas from Karukkachal who had participated in the seminar took the initiative and did everything to start a centre with the help of Y.M.C.A. The Institute was ready to send persons from karukachal who were undergoing training there. Thus, centres were started at Vaikom, Kottayam Changanacherry and Palai.

### **Development Necessary Not For Mentally Retarded Persons Alone**

The Institute authorities have to point out one more thing at this Juncture. The seminar for Kanjirapally was conducted at Ponkunnam. Since a centre was already functioning there under the auspices of the Diocease, they thought that it was against them. Alas! Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix had explained at the meeting convened by the District Collector that the belief that the activities of the central institute in the fight against mental retardation were directed against anybody was baseless. A question is relevant here how it is possible for people who have no broad mentality to produce development in mentally retarded children. A centre is being opened at Kanjirapally on June 25. In that way, the child welfare centre for mental





retardation which is going to function in the building attached to Mary Queen's Hospital will thus overcome that shortfall.

### **Models and Methods**

What was stated above is a short background story of the successful culmination of the efforts of voluntary organisations, individuals, the Central Institute and Government agencies for many months. It is the self explanatory story of the activities which should be a model to any other district, to our state and to the nation as a whole. This is a narrative of the pains the central Institute had taken to bring good days for the children by allowing them to live in their own surroundings and experience the love and affection of their family members. The above mentioned voluntary organisations from Kottayam, the executive officers of the District viz, Shri. P. I. Varghese, D. M. O. Shri. O. C. Vincent, and Smt. Lissy Jacob District Collectors are models to the society itself.

Let development ascend the steps with the help of God.



## Pictorial Remembrance of a Memorable Visit

Smt. Ram Dulari Sinha, Governor of Kerala Visited the Central Institute and D. C. M. R. on June 13, 1988. She spent one hour there with the mentally retarded children, and their teachers. That visit was considered as an authoritative recognition of their activities by the Institute personnel. The Governor also stated that it was a new experience for her.



“Wonder! Wonder! I have not seen such an intensive programme for mentally retarded persons anywhere in India”. The Governor who visited the Institute said. On the dais are Prof. M. K. Sanoo, and Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix.







The intelligence of Raji teacher saved Ammu. To find out mental retardation and give training is an important part of the training programme. The Governor goes round the Centre



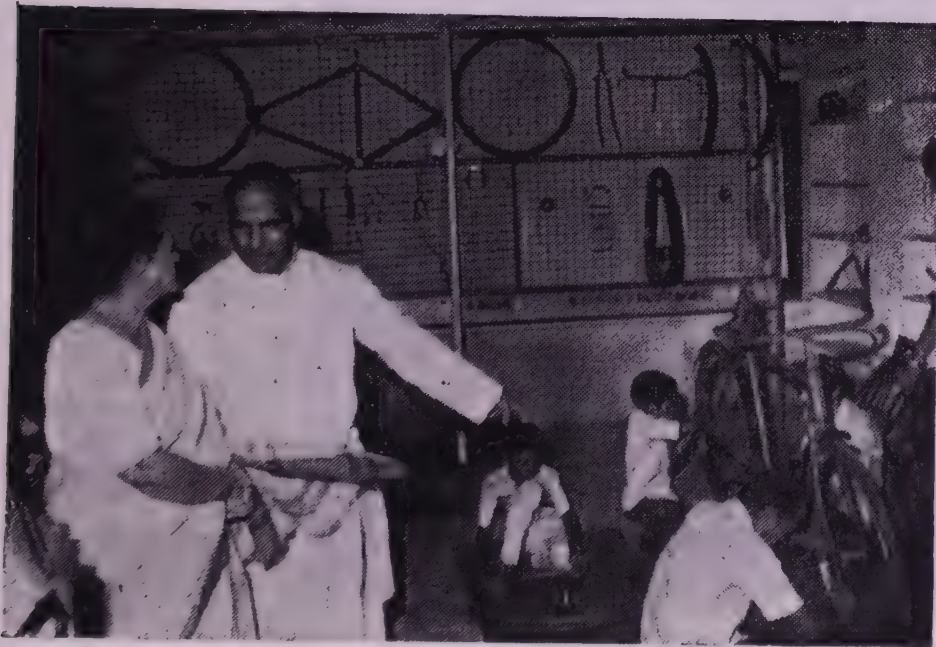
They cut wood with the help of images in their minds. This is a practical approach to achieve ability to know about image, motion etc" Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix, explains to the Governor.







Let it be Governor or anybody, it is not a problem for Sreekumar. Rupesh however answers on behalf of Sreekumar also that he is cutting wood with sword.



"Ahl repairing a cycle! They can thus earn their living.? Is it no t?" The Governor asks Rev. Fr. Thomas Felix.





'Oh You know to prepare rice and curries". The Governor Congragulates the children.



The Governor in the class room. "Devi did not like the visit. There was a sudden break in their activities Nisha is shy. Sr. Elise explains the background of the children.







The Governor Smt. Ram Dulari Sinha is going round the centre during her visit to the Central Institute. Fr. Antony Kurichiaparambil stands near the Governor. Sr. Mercy (Kattappana) Sr. Vijaya (Trichur) Sr. Jasitha (Sherthalai) Kochurani (Karukachal) Mrs. Elsamma Sebastian (Trivandrum) and Sr. Lins (Kanjirapally) can also be seen.





The Central Institute and Information centre on Mental Retardation is a centre established to impart knowledge and ability to teachers and those engaged in research work in the field of mental retardation.

It is absolutely essential that teachers should have a basic approach and knowledge about the activities. The training programme followed here is specially planned and is different from that followed in similar institutions elsewhere in the world. It has also proved to be very effective.

The essence of this training programme is that mentally retarded children should be given training near their homes. An account of the activities against mental retardation carried out in Kottayam district in which the Institute also took part is given in this booklet.

Central Institute and  
Information centre on  
Mental Retardation,  
Jagathy, Trivandrum-14  
Phone 65508









